

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

EVERY one knows in a general way what consciousness is, but when we try to define it we encounter two formidable difficulties. One is caused by the various uses of the term. The old and familiar usage has been criticized and rejected by recent psychologists, and some have even gone so far as to discredit the word altogether and to suggest its banishment from the psychological vocabulary. Others have proposed new and strange applications of it. But consciousness as it has been long and almost universally understood, being an indisputable fact of experience, must have a name to designate it, and there seems to be no sufficient reason for not retaining the name which immemorial usage has assigned to it.

The other difficulty belongs to the nature of that which is to be defined. Consciousness underlies every form of experience as its indispensable presupposition. Without it there could be no mental life. It is the condition and form of all our mental activity, the medium and repository of all our mental data. It is also the source of all our knowledge of the mental operations which we perform upon those data or by means of them. Consciousness then is a primary fact. Of our mental life it is *the* primary fact. But a primary fact is incapable of formal definition. There is no wider class to which we can assign it and there is no variant species from which we can distinguish it.

But there are other methods that may be employed to express its meaning. We may learn what consciousness is